

**America's Great Outdoors**  
**Notes from Listening Session**

Location: Charleston, SC

Date: June 28, 2010

*President Obama launched a national conversation about conservation in America at the White House Conference on the Great Outdoors on April 16, 2010. The President understands that protecting and restoring the lands and waters that we love and reconnecting people to the outdoors must happen at the local level. Therefore, President Obama directed the principal leaders of the Initiative to travel across the country to listen and learn from people directly involved in finding grassroots solutions to conserve our lands, waterways, historical and cultural resources and to reconnect Americans with the Outdoors. The President indicated that the sessions should engage the full range of interested groups, including tribal leaders, farmers and ranchers, sportsmen, community park groups, foresters, youth groups, businesspeople, educators, State and local government, recreation and conservation groups and others. The President placed a special priority on engaging with America's youth. Below are notes from the breakout groups at the Listening Session sorted by Discussion Question. Please feel free to use the ideation tool at <http://ideas.usda.gov/ago/ideas.nsf/> if you would like to share your thoughts.*

Discussion Questions

1. What works: Please share your thoughts and ideas on effective strategies for conservation, recreation and reconnecting people to the outdoors.
2. Challenges: What obstacles exist to achieve your goals for conservation, recreation, or reconnecting people to the outdoors?
3. Federal government role: How can the federal government be a more effective partner in helping to achieve conservation, recreation or reconnecting people to the outdoors?
4. What additional tools and resources would help your efforts be even more successful?

Discussion Question 1-4	Comment
What Works	Gullah needs to connect people to their cultures. A cultural connection and history of an area are crucial to having people want to protect the area, otherwise they don't see how cultural resources and conservation and making a living can come together.
What Works	National Trust for Historic Preservation – What works is something combining historic/cultural preservation and conservation – looking at the broader picture that makes up the conservation landscape. Eating at a local business that's been there forever, or at someone's house;
What Works	My focus on recreation – not to be too simplistic, but for people to reconnect to outdoors, we need access to it. I understand it's important to restrict to something. Thinks National forests are the most users friendly – they have fewest restrictions on use and still do a good job conserving resources. With Private Lands there's no avenue for them to open their lands for recreational users – too much fear of liability;

What Works	Quality of life – trying to capture the things that people moved to area – look at wildlife values; habitat protection. People move here specifically to recreate & we're one of the only areas – it's a fine line
What Works	One is a place charitable groups and others go to; another property, he charges for – lease for hunting; because they pay for it, they feel responsibility – some ownership over it; people talk about how all these things should be free; I feel even if it's on public lands, you use it you pay. Then you remove the expectation that it's all for free. It costs to maintain it and do a good job of it.
What Works	State and national parks; outdoor wildlife recreation areas that bring in kids – introduce them to nature and history working together; through programs that fit the curriculum.
What Works	proponent of municipal and local parks; local parks are the low-hanging fruits – it's the introduction of most urban people to the outdoors – then as they get older they go to state and national parks. Municipalities have more flexibility because they're not tied to goals of fsw, etc.
What Works	historical district is overlayed – zoning can allow protection of culture; for over 25 years she's done eco-tourism or cultural tourism; she calls it ecos-cltural tourism. Take the m to established buildings, etc. Where do we pull sweetgrass, where do we cast net; they have interaction with the people and don't have to go to a visitor's center; when you create people with the holistic view point, you get stewards; people are so affected they want to become stewards
What Works	Put learning stations around all the land they own' they ave an old cabin so you can see how people lived in the 1800's and they have different agencies man the learning stations; lesson plans for schools; there is a liability issue for them though except they think permission forms take care of that; schools can only do one field trip a year and it's a challenge to get transportation; if we could get transportation for the kids, it would help teach the children – otherwise, they'll be taught by people that are maybe scared of the woods (ewwww... snakes!). Can't get the kids to come out. They were overwhelmed that they could measure a tree. Sometimes simple logistics – coordination of the agencies to get them there.
What Works	Blue ways and blue trails are a great way to connect the kids and people to the outdoors and to the cities and towns that are along the way.
What Works	LWCF is one of the best tools but it needs to be secured; stabilize funding for national parks, etc so they have the manpower to manage; tax incentives for private landowners and they need to be permanent.
What Works	If you don't have natural areas this is all for naughts. Tax incentives work – we had enhanced tax incentives for conservation easements – we had easements rolling in until that ended; renew the tax incentives that existed until end of 2009. CRP works – an investment of half a billion dollars; need a re-enrollment program that allows Los to sign up for a second

	K and requires mgmt such as thinning trees to 70 sq basal feet, frequent burning, and planting native warm season grasses; we have commodity, peanut, etc programs, but we don't have it for the forests – why can't we do the same thing for the forests. If you remove the cropping history for CRP, more Los will be able to participate. Fully fund land acquisition, LWCF.
Challenges	Loss of capacity in state government to take advantage of federal dollars – reduced state budgets.
Challenges	Retaining what we have – we really don't have a program that helps land continue to be managed properly –no financial incentive to retain it in longleaf – kind of like CRP but what's going to happen at the end of the day to retain lp when lo dies or land is transferred; lots of little tiny farms on worn out land that continues to be farmed because there's a federal subsidy to grow things we don't really need – corn, cotton, etc. They do it for a federal payment – locally called insurance farming. Why can't we do something about that
Tools	Tax incentives for recreation easements & conservation easements; legal protection for Los with
Tools	Washington is getting in the way – can't figure out what they're going to do about taxes. It's got to be multiple tools, tough we're all working to address the same need. Land is cheaper now so it's the time to do acquisitions
Tools	1000 pound elephant – estate tax/death tax; most people who own land are land rich cash poor so her kids will have to sell off the timber or sell off the land – that's the issue – the fragmentation. Constantly having to look to the future to figure out what the tax situation is going to be. They're trying to figure out which parts of the land should be sold first to pay the taxes. 30 to 50 years you own land; value of land is risen but you have no cash; there has to be a way to look at that.
Challenges	A major challenge is most forestry and USDA programs do not apply to small landowners in her community – they have one acre properties. How can they do lp; 4 to 10 people own a 15 acre property – they won't qualify for the program. Thinks you can't have a group of people apply for a program like CRP – they won't qualify. Plus they need financing. If zoning could change SSO you could get tax credits if they use sustainable practices.
Tools	Forests valued like gasoline, coal; with renewed values then a lot of the small tree farmers would have incentives to keep it in trees rather than subdivide.
Tools	Ecosystem services – no payback for the clean air, clean water – should be an additional funding source for those folks – we've been lucky that we've never been taxed for those amenities.
Tools	A lot of people will donate part of their land and get a tax credit.
Tools	New tools coming on line all the time; tax credit being divided Charleston county – someone going to urban section, someone going to rural area, someone going to.... ; we have to be created when we use the new tools coming online; the more leveraging we can do the farther the dollars will stretch farther;
Challenges	Most landowners aren't able financially to attend an even t like this; if it were a Saturday then perhaps we could reach landowners. Almost every event like this there's only a handful of landowners. They can't afford to come. If you are truly trying to listen we should have it on weekend. No wonder they don't trust us or they aren't engaged or we're not reaching

	them. Evenings have a meal; take care of local business.
	Gullah sea island coalition does food and drink and meeting on you and your land and how it can benefit you or zoning changes and how they can affect you; that pulls people together. People of color are not on the lists to get in meetings like this. There's no trust factor because we don't know you exist so there's no trust. How was I going to go, I had to work. And what about my children. Need a different mindset about who are you trying to reach. Everyone communicates differently, too. To Margaret, easements sound really good; to Gullagetchees, it means theft. Need educational campaigns geared to different cultures. We need to tailor things so they see themselves in it. If I can't see what you're saying, it won't work.
	Landowner workshops, meetings on weekends, evening; that's when we educate them about what easements are.
	Silos of natural resources preservation; cultural preservation and; there are also silos of government agencies, but everyone wants the same thing – sustainable communities, etc. but they don't talk to each other.  It's all about aligning of interests
	Game bird research facility and we have fire ecologist, too. TT is interested in managing for diversity. The overlap of interests really helps. A LO may approach us for quail, but when I go over the plan with them, they'll see there are other opportunities for income when they plant LLP; this makes them receptive to the multiple use; regular occurrence of fire brings in native plant species and wildlife community that's better suited for this area. Education is what's needed so we can get folks to see how all these elements work to create a healthy forest with multiple species (v how a forester might see things as board feet per acre).
	costs in planting; costs in management; so if you're going to have LO's successfully planting ll, you're losing \$\$ so they're planting the more productive, faster-growing pines that they can harvest after 15 years or so whereas for LLP
Challenges	Lots of folks use waterways for subsistence but there are no laws for that so these families get caught in the middle. The Savannah River Plant pollutants are coming down because of this and the feds just gave the plant more \$\$ so causing more issues for the subsistence fishermen. And why do the studies if we're going to finance harmful activities anyway; one agency worried about toxins, but another funded what created the problem
Challenges	There's a CRP program where people are paid to plant llp – need to expand that program so it's attractive to LO's to plant llp. Survival rates on llp are good as loblolly or slash with containerized seedling. Give the Los incentive to plant that tree versus another kind. LLP has as good a growth rate as loblolly on comparable soil. Thin CRP stands properly, have to have fire – be able to burn. Quail needs it as well – that open, pine forested savannahs; help them out on the extra seedling costs, site prep , planning & offset the income they're losing & pine straw harvesting
Challenges	Point of view RCWs love mature LLP; LLP are penalized because of the mature pine because of the RCW. If you get that there, you can't cut down the trees around the area – you've spent all that time to grow those trees and now you can't cut them and can't send their kids

	to school. There need to be incentives, not penalties to folks who do the llp.
Federal Governments Role	Got to pay people to be out there educating kids – teach 4, 5, and 6 <sup>th</sup> graders. A cost-share program through FWS that match salaries of teachers and staffing the visitor's center – at wildlife refuges, etc. education often isn't seen as the integral part of things and is the first thing cut. Also, when creative programs come along, they don't always match what the local program says. FS won't allow the land in because it says FS will always have to use the land that way, but the local program says because there are local tax dollars in there, they shouldn't -- Charleston County Greenbelt has a program. The piece they need has a clause that says it can revert back to the state/forest. I'm confused. \$26 million to leverage federal dollars. Definitely thinks there should be leveraging. Need to take where lessons have worked.
Federal Governments Role	Getting local people involved will solve a lot of programs.
Federal Governments Role	Great way to connect rural and urban areas; trails are already there – working with federal partners to develop a toolkit to help communities create their own blueways.
Federal Governments Role	Tax incentives for keeping your land like it is – not develop it – people who keep a farmhouse, or other land as open space; developers get incentives all the time to keep building buildings. Can we switch it? So we protect the outdoors instead of building more buildings. She's referring to property taxes. Property taxes are the reason the gullahgetchees end up losing their land.
Federal Governments Role	A great idea would be a program for small landowners – 1 to 20 acres – especially if you're trying to maintain a rural community. A program specific to do that.
Federal Governments Role	CRP typically targeted farm acres – how do you get to acres that have not been farmed? The small farms?
Federal Governments Role	There's such a lot of coordination that's needed. Private – public partnerships
Federal Governments Role	Remove cropping history requirement from CRP.
Federal Governments Role	Bring forestry industry to public's attention – what it does not only for renewable wood products, but for air and water, etc. Education is critical – maybe public service announcements to elevate forestry to where it belongs.

Federal Governments Role	Think about a local citizen task for once in conjunction with this national one
Federal Governments Role	Quality of life big part of conservation in communities. It would be helpful for government agencies to capture the things that are important to the people in the area. Land should have easy access for use for nature trails, cross country track teams, etc. Give the people access to use the land. Get the non-locals and bring them into conservation education via the recreational avenue. Introduce them to the goals of FWL refuge.
What Works	Has two ways that has worked. One is a place for friends & family to enjoy – had worked for him. On another property he leases the land to hunters and since they pay to lease the land, they take care of the land and help to preserve and use conservation practices to enhance the land. They have a vested interest in the land since they pay. When the expectation is removed that everything is free, then people get the wrong idea because they tend to forget that someone is paying to provide the service.
What Works	Bring in school children and introduce them to the facility/land and history. Educate the children in conservation measures and practices. Later these will be the constituents and give support to conservation laws/regulations/practices in the future.
What Works	The entry point for a lot of people is to introduce their children to the outdoors, conservation and outside environments. Then later in life they will visit National/State/County/Municipal Parks as they get older and have a respect for conservation practice.
What Works	We have zoning laws locally to protect the culture and then there much be regulations to keep the environment and this ties back to protecting the culture. Eco-tourism – bio diversity – tours will visit a cultural community to established local businesses and observe how the business ties back to the culture and environment; such as sweet grass, throw shrimp nets. Connect them with people and allow them to experience the culture/environment connection through hands-on experiences. People remember when experiences make a difference in life on a given day.
What Works	School children visit their land and they have placed learning station throughout the property about wildlife indigenous to the area, and an old cabin is also maintained during the tour. Different and diverse agencies come and man the stations providing education to the children as the tour and interact with the environment. The tour is set to follows the 4 <sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. Classes can only take one field trip per year because of funding. We must teach children about the culture, environment, woods and what is safe. This provides a wonderful hands-on day to educate children. It is true that a picture is worth a thousand words and during the day the experiences provide many multi-sensory pictures to educate about habitat and environment. Need coordination of agencies to get the children to these events.
What Works	Blue ways and trails are a way to connect people and kids - to help them want to protect the waterways. When they enjoy the water this inspires them to want to protect conservation

	and resources.
What Works	LWCR is one of the best tools, but need to stabilize the funding. Have the manpower but they need funding for managing the land. Permanent funds are needed, not something that changes each year.
What Works	Tax incentives work. Federal government can restore tax incentive. CRP programs work. Need to establish reenrollment for continuous CRP when CRP contracts expire to allow landowners to sign up for new contracts which will require the landowner to thin, burn and plant native grasses. Programs need to place a value on forestry land to mirror the row crop programs without a limit on it.
Challenges	<p>A program needs to be established to retain what is in place. Incentive to retain land in long leaf pines after the deceasing of the landowner. Another obstacle – Tiny farms, real small, not well managed nor maintained are operating for one reason only and that is for federal subsidy payments. Or in some cases the only reason they continue to farm is for collecting insurance.</p> <p>Another idea could come with tax incentive for recreational easements which also provides legal protection for private landowners.</p>
Challenges	DC is in the way – no one knows what the regulations are going to be. The landowner needs as much time as possible to implement the regulations to protection as much as possible and to carry the practice before the end of the year. Need to know law before the first of Dec. It is impossible to implement practices during the last 4 weeks of the year.
Challenges	1000 lb. elephant is the Estate Tax. Most people who own land are land rich, cash poor. Children would have to sale the land to pay the taxes. Landowners love their land and they are having to sale so the children will not get stuck with taxes. This is another way the land is vanishing away from the conservationist.
Challenges	Major challenge – do not apply to landowner of 1 acre. These owners would not qualify. At death, now 14 people own the property. Thinks you can't have group of people apply for a program like CRP. Challenge is financing. Tax credit would benefit when the timber was used for building on land.
Challenges	Forests should be evaluated the same as gas/coal, etc. The public must be educated to look at the forests as a renewal resource when other natural resources are not.
Challenges	Ecosystem service – no payback for the clean air, water – should be an additional funding source or a tax incentive. These things are not taxed – been lucky so far.
Challenges	Donate land to use by municipality for tax credit.
Challenges	One pot of money to be divide - ½ cent tax deal – been great in Charleston Co. Money is divided between parks/recreation and two other agencies. Has funded these departments in

	the past several years for 3 counties.
Challenges	Most landowners are not able financially to attend an event like this. Suggestion would be to hold this type of meeting on a Saturday. This would reach landowners more than through the week. If the gov't is really trying to listen to the landowners- then the meetings has failed because the landowners are few in attendance today. Suggestion is to go to the events that the landowners – local landowners, tree farmer meetings attend at night with dinner sponsored by local business and a local educational experience such as local Forester or Clemson Ext. agent provides instructions. Trust is not there since Govt is not meeting with the landowners.
Challenges	Gullah Sea Island Coalition does have sponsors for meeting providing food & drink. Like today, minority groups/individuals are not usually invited to these type of events. She suggested an Educational campaign to the different cultural of people. The only way to make the Great Outdoors successful is getting the people to see themselves in it.
Challenges	Suggest landowner workshops – 3 times per year in different communities within the state/areas.
Challenges	Silos of natural preservation – same goals for all agencies – but they do not communicate with each other. Everyone wants the same thing –sustainable communities, etc. but the difference programs for the agencies are so territorial but the practices are the same/similar and working toward the same results.
Challenges	Resources are the difference. Game bird facility and fire ecologist. Goal is to manage diversity. Over lapping the interest of people helps. Landowners approaches us to increase quail population when the plan is established and reviewed, the landowner sees opportunities for income when they plant longleaf pines. This also increases the species in the wildlife community. Education is a tool and challenge to let people see how everything comes together to enhance a healthy forest.
Challenges	The bottom line is the land owner. When planting longleaf pines the landowner is concerned with the higher costs of planting and decreased profit in the end because the production is less that the loblolly pine. Those that plant long leaf pines will lose money due to less production, higher costs of container seedlings, etc. Land owner needs incentives after 15 years - they can only thin with little profit and they have been patient for 15 yrs. Survival rate on longleaf pines is not as good as the loblolly pine.
Challenges	Waterways used for subsistence but there are no laws & families get caught in the middle between State/Federal laws. There needs to be a better coordination of regulations.
Governments Role	If CRP is to plant long leaf pines then expand the program. Make the program attractive to the landowner for selecting the long leaf pine instead of Loblolly. Enhance the program to



	include incentives for thinning and burning properly. Ecosystems in SC need fire. Habitats need fire to allow native ground cover and wildlife to come to the forest and keep hardwoods under control. Help the landowner out on the extra seedling costs, site-prep costs and help them to offset the income loss for selecting long leaf pines. Another incentive would be to provide would be for harvesting pine straw.
Governments Role	Growing loblolly, redheaded woodpecker loves the long leaf pines. The matured long leaf pines in the nesting ground for the redheaded woodpecker. So when there is a presence of the woodpecker, then regulations are in place that say a land owner can't cut the trees because of the endangered species presence. Coordination from the agencies to eliminate this regulation is necessary to encourage the planting of long leaf pines. This has the appearance of a being a penalty for planting long leaf pines.
Governments Role	Government needs. Good educational program. Need to pay instructors to educate the public. Funds are needed to staff visitor centers at county/state/national parks by individuals who can educate the public. Must spend the \$ to educate the public. Conflicts exist between county and forest service. There is a clause that states the land must always be used a certain way. The agency can't get past the law to say the land has to be used the same forever. \$ is being turned away because of the future use clause – Charleston County Greenbelt has a program but lawyers will not accept the language in the grant because of this 'future use clause'. Take lesson as to where things work and mirror this in the law
Governments Role	Nationwide system of blue ways. Great way to connect great outdoors to the water. Working on a tool for cities to use to utilize the blueways website. The trails and waterways are already there, need to publicize and get people to these locations.
Governments Role	Tax incentives to landowners to not sale and not build buildings. Property taxes incentives not to sale.
Governments Role	Incentive to the small land owner to cultural/historical communities.
Governments Role	CRP targets current farmland.
Governments Role	Coordination among agencies and programs. Public/Private communications. Recognition that lot of programs overlapping and coordination of federal/state/local agencies are not recognizing. Everyone should be a team player, not on opposite sides.
Governments Role	remove cropping history from the CRP program
Governments	Upgrade forest resources and recognize what the forestry provides. Education is critical, starting with school age children.








































